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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

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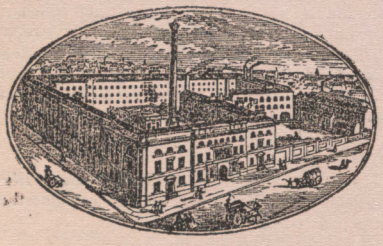

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"WHAT IS IT THAT I BEHOLD?"

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MR. CRAWLEY SPEAKS OF HIS COAT.

AT this time Grace had returned home from Framley. As long as the terrible tragedy of the forthcoming trial was dragging itself on she had been content to stay away, at her mother's bidding. It has not been possible in these pages to tell of all the advice that had been given to the ladies of the Crawley family in their great difficulty, and of all the assistance that had been offered. The elder Lady Lufton and the younger, and Mrs. Robarts had continually been in consultation on the subject; Mrs. Grantly's opinion had been asked and given; and even the Miss Prettymans and Mrs. Walker had found means of expressing themselves. The communications to Mrs. Crawley had been very frequent,—though they had not of course been allowed to reach the ears of Mr. Crawley. What was to be done when the living should be gone and Mr. Crawley should be in prison? Some said that he might be there for six weeks, and some for two years. Old Lady Lufton made anxious inquiries about Judge Medlicote, before whom it was said that the trial would be taken. Judge Medlicote was a Dissenter, and old Lady Lufton was in despair. When she was assured by some liberally-disposed friend that this would certainly make no difference, she shook her head woefully. "I don't know why we are to have Dissenters at all," she said, "to try people who belong to the Established Church." When she heard that Judge Medlicote would certainly be the judge, she made up her mind that two years would be the least of it. She would not have minded it, she said, if he had been a Roman Catholic. And whether the punishment might be for six weeks or for

two years, what should be done with the family? Where should they be housed? how should they be fed? What should be done with the poor man when he came out of prison? It was a case in which the generous, soft-hearted old Lady Lufton was almost beside herself. "As for Grace," said young Lady Lufton, "it will be a great deal better that we should keep her amongst us. Of course she will become Mrs. Grantly, and it will be nicer for her that it should be so." In those days the posters had been seen, and the flitting to Pau had been talked of, and the Framley opinion was that Grace had better remain at Framley till she should be carried off to Pau. There were schemes, too, about Jane. But what was to be done for the wife? And what was to be done for Mr. Crawley? Then came the news from Mrs. Arabin, and all interest in Judge Medlicote was at an end.

But even now, after this great escape, what was to be done? As to Grace, she had felt the absolute necessity of being obedient to her friends,—with the consent of course of her mother,—during the great tribulation of her family. Things were so bad that she had not the heart to make them worse by giving any unnecessary trouble as to herself. Having resolved,—and having made her mother so understand,—that on one point she would guide herself by her own feelings, she was contented to go hither and thither as she was told, and to do as she was bid. Her hope was that Miss Prettyman would allow her to go back to her teaching, but it had come to be understood among them all that nothing was to be said on that subject till the trial should be over. Till that time she would be passive. But then, as I have said, had come the news from Mrs. Arabin, and Grace, with all the others, understood that there would be no trial. When this was known and acknowledged, she declared her purpose of going back to Hogglestock. She would go back at once. When asked both by Lady Lufton and by Mrs. Robarts why she was in so great a haste, she merely said that it must be so. She was, as it were, absolved from her passive obedience to Framley authorities by the diminution of the family misfortunes.

Mrs. Robarts understood the feeling by which Grace was hurried away. "Do you know why she is so obstinate?" Lady Lufton asked.

"I think I do," said Mrs. Robarts.

"And what is it?"

"Should Major Grantly renew his offer to her she is under a pledge to accept him now."

"Of course he will renew it, and of course she will accept him."

"Just so. But she prefers that he should come for her to her own

house,—because of its poverty. If he chooses to seek her there, I don't think she will make much difficulty." Lady Lufton demurred to this, not however with anger, and expressed a certain amount of mild displeasure. She did not quite see why Major Grantly should not be allowed to come and do his love-making comfortably, where there was a decent dinner for him to eat, and chairs and tables and sofas and carpets. She said that she thought that something was due to Major Grantly. She was in truth a little disappointed that she was not allowed to have her own way, and to arrange the marriage at Framley under her own eye. But, through it all, she appreciated Grace; and they who knew her well and heard what she said upon the occasion, understood that her favour was not to be withdrawn. All young women were divided by old Lady Lufton into sheep and goats,—very white sheep and very black goats;—and Grace was to be a sheep. Thus it came to pass that Grace Crawley was at home when the dean visited Hogglestock. "Mamma," she said, looking out of the window, "there is the dean with papa at the gate."

"It was a narrow squeak—a very narrow squeak," Mr. Crawley had said when his friend congratulated him on his escape. The dean felt at the moment that not for many years had he heard the incumbent of Hogglestock speak either of himself or of anything else with so manifest an attempt at jocularity. Arabin had expected to find the man broken down by the weight of his sorrows, and lo! at the first moment of their first interview he himself began to ridicule them! Crawley having thus alluded to the narrow squeak had asked his visitor to enter the house and see his wife.

"Of course I will," said Arabin, "but I will speak just a word to you first." Jane, who had accompanied the dean from the school, now left them, and went into the house to her mother. "My wife cannot forgive herself about the cheque," continued he.

"There is nothing to be forgiven," said Mr. Crawley; "nothing."

"She feels that what she did was awkward and foolish. She ought never to have paid a cheque away in such a manner. She knows that now."

"It was given,—not paid," said Crawley; and as he spoke something of the black cloud came back upon his face. "And I am well aware how hard Mrs. Arabin strove to take away from the alms she bestowed the bitterness of the sting of eleemosynary aid. If you please, Arabin, we will not talk any more of that. I can never forget that I have been a beggar, but I need not make my beggary the matter of conversation. I hope the Holy Land has fulfilled your expectation?"

"It has more than done so," said the dean, bewildered by the sudden change.

"For myself, it is, of course, impossible that I should ever visit any scenes except those to which my immediate work may call me,—never in this world. The new Jerusalem is still within my reach,—if it be not forfeited by pride and obstinacy; but the old Jerusalem I can never behold. Methinks, because it is so, I would sooner stand with my foot on Mount Olivet, or drink a cup of water in the village of Bethany, than visit any other spot within the traveller's compass. The sources of the Nile, of which men now talk so much,—I see it in the papers and reviews which the ladies at Framley are so good as to send to my wife,—do not interest me much. I have no ambition to climb Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn; Rome makes my mouth water but little, nor even Athens much. I can realize without seeing all that Athens could show me, and can fancy that the existing truth would destroy more than it would build up. But to have stood on Calvary!"

"We don't know where Calvary was," said the dean.

"I fancy that I should know,—should know enough," said the illogical and unreasonable Mr. Crawley. "Is it true that you can look over from the spot on which He stood as He came across the brow of the hill, and see the huge stones of the Temple placed there by Solomon's men,—as He saw them;—right across the brook Cedron, is it not?"

"It is all there, Crawley,—just as your knowledge of it tells you."

"In the privilege of seeing those places I can almost envy a man his—money." The last word he uttered after a pause. He had been about to say that under such temptation he could almost envy a man his promotion; but he bethought himself that on such an occasion as this it would be better that he should spare the dean. "And now, if you wish it, we will go in. I fancy that I see my wife at the window, as though she were waiting for us." So saying, he strode on along the little path, and the dean was fain to follow him, even though he had said so little of all that he had intended to say.

As soon as he was with Mrs. Crawley he repeated his apology about the cheque, and found himself better able to explain himself than he could do when alone with her husband. "Of course, it has been our fault," he said.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Crawley, "how can you have been in fault when your only object was to do us good?" But, nevertheless, the dean took the blame upon his own shoulders, or, rather upon those

of his wife, and declared himself to be responsible for all the trouble about the cheque.

"Let it go," said Crawley, after sitting for awhile in silence; "let it pass."

"You cannot wonder, Crawley," said the dean, "that I should have felt myself obliged to speak of it."

"For the future it will be well that it should be forgotten," said Crawley; "or, if not forgotten, treated as though forgotten. And now, dean, what must I do about the living?"

"Just resume it, as though nothing had happened."

"But that may hardly be done without the bishop's authority. I speak, of course, with deference to your higher and better information on such subjects. My experience in the taking up and laying down of livings has not been extended. But it seemeth to me that though it may certainly be in your power to nominate me again to the perpetual curacy of this parish,—presuming your patronage to be unlimited and not to reach you in rotation only,—yet the bishop may demand to institute again, and must so demand, unless he pleases to permit that my letter to him shall be revoked and cancelled."

"Of course he will do anything of that kind. He must know the circumstances as well as you and I do."

"At present they tell me that he is much afflicted by the death of his wife, and, therefore, can hardly be expected to take immediate action. There came here on the last Sunday one Mr. Snapper, his lordship's chaplain."

"We all know Snapper," said the dean. "Snapper is not a bad little fellow."

"I say nothing of his being bad, my friend, but merely mention the fact that on Sunday morning last he performed the service in our church. On the Sunday previous, one Mr. Thumble was here."

"We all know Thumble, too," said the dean; "or, at least, know something about him."

"He has been a thorn in our sides," said Mrs. Crawley, unable to restrain the expression of her dislike when Mr. Thumble's name was mentioned.

"Nay, my dear, nay;—do not allow yourself the use of language so strong against a brother. Our flesh at that time was somewhat prone to fester, and little thorns made us very sore."

"He is a horrible man," said Jane, almost in a whisper; but the words were distinctly audible by the dean.

"They need not come any more," said Arabin.

"That is where I fear we differ. I think they must come,—or some others in their place,—till the bishop shall have expressed his pleasure to the contrary. I have submitted myself to his lordship, and, having done so, feel that I cannot again go up into my pulpit till he shall have authorized me to do so. For a time, Arabin, I combated the bishop, believing,—then and now,—that he put forth his hand against me after a fashion which the law had not sanctioned. And I made bold to stand in his presence and to tell him that I would not obey him, except in things legal. But afterwards, when he proceeded formally, through the action of a commission, I submitted myself. And I regard myself still as being under submission."

It was impossible to shake him. Arabin remained there for more than an hour, trying to pass on to another subject, but being constantly brought back by Mr. Crawley himself to the fact of his own dependent position. Nor would he condescend to supplicate the bishop. It was, he surmised, the duty of Dr. Tempest, together with the other four clergymen, to report to the bishop on the question of the alleged theft; and then doubtless the bishop, when he had duly considered the report, and,—as Mr. Crawley seemed to think was essentially necessary,—had sufficiently recovered from the grief at his wife's death, would, at his leisure, communicate his decision to Mr. Crawley. Nothing could be more complete than Mr. Crawley's humility in reference to the bishop; and he never seemed to be tired of declaring that he had submitted himself!

And then the dean, finding it to be vain to expect to be left alone with Mr. Crawley for a moment,—in vain also to wait for a proper opening for that which he had to say,—rushed violently at his other subject. "And now, Mrs. Crawley," he said, "Mrs. Arabin wishes you all to come over to the deanery for a while and stay with us."

"Mrs. Arabin is too kind," said Mrs. Crawley, looking across at her husband.

"We should like it of all things," said the dean, with perhaps more of good nature than of truth. "Of course you must have been knocked about a good deal."

"Indeed we have," said Mrs. Crawley.

"And till you are somewhat settled again, I think that the change of scene would be good for all of you. Come, Crawley, I'll talk to you every evening about Jerusalem for as long as you please;—and then there will perhaps come back to us something of the pleasantness of old days." As she heard this Mrs. Crawley's eyes became full of tears, and she could not altogether hide them. What she had endured

during the last four months had almost broken her spirit. The burden had at last been too heavy for her strength. "You cannot fancy, Crawley, how often I have thought of the old days and wished that they might return. I have found it very hard to get an opportunity of saying so much to you; but I will say it now."

"It may hardly be as you say," said Crawley, grimly.

"You mean that the old days can never be brought back?"

"Assuredly they cannot. But it was not that that I meant. It may not be that I and mine should transfer ourselves to your roof and sojourn there."

"Why should you not?"

"The reasons are many, and on the face of things. The reason, perhaps, the most on the face is to be found in my wife's gown, and in my coat." This Mr. Crawley said very gravely, looking neither to the right nor to the left, nor at the face of any of them, nor at his own garment, nor at hers, but straight before him; and when he had so spoken he said not a word further,—not going on to dilate on his poverty as the dean expected that he would do.

"At such a time such reasons should stand for nothing," said the dean.

"And why not now as they always do, and always must till the power of tailors shall have waned, and the daughters of Eve shall toil and spin no more? Like to like is true, and should be held to be true, of all societies and of all compacts for co-operation and mutual living. Here, where, if I may venture to say so, you and I are like to like;—for the new gloss of your coat,"—the dean, as it happened, had on at the moment a very old coat, his oldest coat, selected perhaps with some view to this special visit,—"does not obtrude itself in my household, as would the threadbare texture of mine in yours;—I can open my mouth to you and converse with you at my ease; you are now to me that Frank Arabin who has so often comforted me and so often confuted me; whom I may perhaps on an occasion have confuted—and perhaps have comforted. But were I sitting with you in your library in Barchester, my threadbare coat would be too much for me. I should be silent, if not sullen. I should feel the weight of all my poverty, and the greater weight of all your wealth. For my children, let them go. I have come to know that they will be better away from me."

"Papa!" said Jane.

"Papa does not mean it," said Grace, coming up to him and standing close to him.

There was silence amongst them for a few moments, and then the

master of the house shook himself,—literally shook himself, till he had shaken off the cloud. He had taken Grace by the hand, and thrusting out the other arm had got it round Jane's waist. "When a man has girls, Arabin," he said, "as you have, but not big girls yet like Grace here, of course he knows that they will fly away."

"I shall not fly away," said Jane.

"I don't know what papa means," said Grace.

Upon the whole the dean thought it the pleasantest visit he had ever made to Hogglestock, and when he got home he told his wife that he believed that the accusation made against Mr. Crawley had done him good. "I could not say a word in private to her," he said, "but I did promise that you would go and see her." On the very next day Mrs. Arabin went over, and I think that the visit was a comfort to Mrs. Crawley.

CHAPTER LXXX.

MISS DEMOLINES DESIRES TO BECOME A FINGER-POST.

John Eames had passed Mrs. Thorne in the hall of her own house almost without noticing her as he took his departure from Lily Dale. She had told him as plainly as words could speak that she could not bring herself to be his wife,—and he had believed her. He had sworn to himself that if he did not succeed now he would never ask her again. "It would be foolish and unmanly to do so," he said to himself as he rushed along the street towards his club. No! That romance was over. At last there had come an end to it! "It has taken a good bit out of me," he said, arresting his steps suddenly that he might stand still and think of it all. "By George, yes! A man doesn't go through that kind of thing without losing some of the caloric. I couldn't do it again if an angel came in my way." He went to his club, and tried to be jolly. He ordered a good dinner, and got some man to come and dine with him. For an hour or so he held himself up, and did appear to be jolly. But as he walked home at night, and gave himself time to think over what had taken place with deliberation, he stopped in the gloom of a deserted street and leaning against the rails burst into tears. He had really loved her and she was never to be his. He had wanted her,—and it is so painful a thing to miss what you want when you have done your very best to obtain it! To struggle in vain always hurts the pride; but the wound made by the vain struggle for a woman is sorer than any other wound so made. He gnashed his teeth, and struck the

iron railings with his stick;—and then he hurried home, swearing that he would never give another thought to Lily Dale. In the dead of the night, thinking of it still, he asked himself whether it would not be a fine thing to wait another ten years, and then go to her again. In such a way would he not make himself immortal as a lover beyond any Jacob or any Leander?

The next day he went to his office and was very grave. When Sir Raffle complimented him on being back before his time, he simply said that when he had accomplished that for which he had gone, he had, of course, come back. Sir Raffle could not get a word out from him about Mr. Crawley. He was very grave, and intent upon his work. Indeed he was so serious that he quite afflicted Sir Raffle,—whose mock activity felt itself to be confounded by the official zeal of his private secretary. During the whole of that day Johnny was resolving that there could be no cure for his malady but hard work. He would not only work hard at the office if he remained there, but he would take to heavy reading. He rather thought that he would go deep into Greek and do a translation, or take up the exact sciences and make a name for himself that way. But as he had enough for the life of a secluded literary man without his salary, he rather thought that he would give up his office altogether. He had a mutton chop at home that evening, and spent his time in endeavouring to read out loud to himself certain passages from the Iliad;—for he had bought a Homer as he returned from his office. At nine o'clock he went, half-price, to the Strand Theatre. How he met there his old friend Boulger and went afterwards to "The Cock" and had a supper need not here be told with more accurate detail.

On the evening of the next day he was bound by his appointment to go to Porchester Terrace. In the moments of his enthusiasm about Homer he had declared to himself that he would never go near Miss Demolines again. Why should he? All that kind of thing was nothing to him now. He would simply send her his compliments and say that he was prevented by business from keeping his engagement. She, of course, would go on writing to him for a time, but he would simply leave her letters unanswered, and the thing, of course, would come to an end at last. He afterwards said something to Boulger about Miss Demolines,—but that was during the jollity of their supper,—and he then declared that he would follow out that little game. "I don't see why a fellow isn't to amuse himself, eh, Boulger, old boy?" Boulger winked and grinned, and said that some amusements were dangerous. "I don't think that there is any danger there," said Johnny. "I don't

believe she is thinking of that kind of thing herself;—not with me at least. What she likes is the pretence of a mystery; and as it is amusing I don't see why a fellow shouldn't indulge her." But that determination was pronounced after two mutton chops at "The Cock," between one and two o'clock in the morning. On the next day he was cooler and wiser. Greek he thought might be tedious as he discovered that he would have to begin again from the very alphabet. He would therefore abandon that idea. Greek was not the thing for him, but he would take up the sanitary condition of the poor in London. A fellow could be of some use in that way, In the meantime he would keep his appointment with Miss Demolines, simply because it was an appointment. A gentleman should always keep his word to a lady!

He did keep his appointment with Miss Demolines, and was with her almost precisely at the hour she had named. She received him with a mysterious tranquillity which almost perplexed him. He remembered, however, that the way to enjoy the society of Miss Demolines was to take her in all her moods with perfect seriousness, and was therefore very tranquil himself. On the present occasion she did not rise as he entered the room, and hardly spoke as she tendered to him the tips of her fingers to be touched. As she said almost nothing, he said nothing at all, but sank into a chair and stretched his legs out comfortably before him. It had been always understood between them that she was to bear the burden of the conversation.

"You'll have a cup of tea?" she said.

"Yes;—if you do." Then the page brought the tea, and John Eames amused himself with swallowing three slices of very thin bread and butter.

"None for me,—thanks," said Madalina. "I rarely eat after dinner, and not often much then. I fancy that I should best like a world in which there was no eating."

"A good dinner is a very good thing," said John. And then there was again silence. He was aware that some great secret was to be told to him during this evening, but he was much too discreet to show any curiosity upon that subject. He sipped his tea to the end, and then, having got up to put his cup down, stood on the rug with his back to the fire. "Have you been out to-day?" he asked.

"Indeed I have."

"And you are tired?"

"Very tired!"

"Then perhaps I had better not keep you up."

"Your remaining will make no difference in that respect. I don't

suppose that I shall be in bed for the next four hours. But do as you like about going."

"I am in no hurry," said Johnny. Then he sat down again, stretched out his legs and made himself comfortable.

"I have been to see that woman," said Madalina after a pause.

"What woman?"

"Maria Clutterbuck,—as I must always call her; for I cannot bring myself to pronounce the name of that poor wretch who was done to death."

"He blew his brains out in delirium tremens," said Johnny.

"And what made him drink?" said Madalina with emphasis. "Never mind. I decline altogether to speak of it. Such a scene as I have had! I was driven at last to tell her what I thought of her. Anything so callous, so heartless, so selfish, so stone-cold, and so childish, I never saw before! That Maria was childish and selfish I always knew;—but I thought there was some heart,—a vestige of heart. I found to-day that there was none,—none. If you please we won't speak of her any more."

"Certainly not," said Johnny.

"You need not wonder that I am tired and feverish."

"That sort of thing is fatiguing, I dare say. I don't know whether we do not lose more than we gain by those strong emotions."

"I would rather die and go beneath the sod at once, than live without them," said Madalina.

"It's a matter of taste," said Johnny.

"It is there that that poor wretch is so deficient. She is thinking now, this moment, of nothing but her creature comforts. That tragedy has not even stirred her pulses."

"If her pulses were stirred ever so, that would not make her happy."

"Happy! Who is happy? Are you happy?"

Johnny thought of Lily Dale and paused before he answered. No; certainly he was not happy. But he was not going to talk about his unhappiness to Miss Demolines! "Of course I am;—as jolly as a sandboy," he said.

"Mr. Eames," said Madalina raising herself on her sofa, "if you can not express yourself in language more suitable to the occasion and to the scene than that, I think that you had better——"

"Hold my tongue."

"Just so;—though I should not have chosen myself to use words so abruptly discourteous."

"What did I say;—jolly as a sandboy? There is nothing wrong in that. What I meant was, that I think that this world is a very good sort of world, and that a man can get along in it very well, if he minds his *p*s and *q*s."

"But suppose it's a woman?"

"Easier still."

"And suppose she does not mind her *p*s and *q*s?"

"Women always do."

"Do they? Your knowledge of women goes as far as that, does it? Tell me fairly;—do you think you know anything about women?" Madalina as she asked the question, looked full into his face, and shook her locks and smiled. When she shook her locks and smiled, there was a certain attraction about her of which John Eames was fully sensible. She could throw a special brightness into her eyes, which, though it probably betokened nothing truly beyond ill-natured mischief, seemed to convey a promise of wit and intellect.

"I don't mean to make any boast about it," said Johnny.

"I doubt whether you know anything. The pretty simplicity of your excellent Lily Dale has sufficed for you."

"Never mind about her," said Johnny impatiently.

"I do not mind about her in the least. But an insight into that sort of simplicity will not teach you the character of a real woman. You cannot learn the flavour of wines by sipping sherry and water. For myself I do not think that I am simple. I own it fairly. If you must have simplicity, I cannot be to your taste."

"Nobody likes partridge always," said Johnny laughing.

"I understand you, sir. And though what you say is not complimentary, I am willing to forgive that fault for its truth. I don't consider myself to be always partridge, I can assure you. I am as changeable as the moon."

"And as fickle?"

"I say nothing about that, sir. I leave you to find that out. It is a man's business to discover that for himself. If you really do know aught of women——"

"I did not say that I did."

"But if you do, you will perhaps have discovered that a woman may be as changeable as the moon, and yet as true as the sun;—that she may flit from flower to flower, quite unheeding while no passion exists, but that a passion fixes her at once. Do you believe me?" Now she looked into his eyes again, but did not smile and did not shake her locks.

"Oh yes;—that's true enough. And when they have a lot of children, then they become steady as milestones."

"Children!" said Madalina, getting up and walking about the room.

"They do have them you know," said Johnny.

"Do you mean to say, sir, that I should be a milestone?"

"A finger-post," said Johnny, "to show a fellow the way he ought to go."

She walked twice across the room without speaking. Then she came and stood opposite to him, still without speaking,—and then she walked about again. "What could a woman better be, than a finger-post, as you call it, with such a purpose?"

"Nothing better, of course;—though a milestone to tell a fellow his distances, is very good."

"Psha!"

"You don't like the idea of being a milestone."

"No!"

"Then you can make up your mind to be a finger-post."

"John, shall I be a finger-post for you?" She stood and looked at him for a moment or two, with her eyes full of love, as though she were going to throw herself into his arms. And she would have done so, no doubt, instantly, had he risen to his legs. As it was, after having gazed at him for the moment with her love-laden eyes, she flung herself on the sofa, and hid her face among the cushions.

He had felt that it was coming for the last quarter of an hour,—and he had felt, also, that he was quite unable to help himself. He did not believe that he should ever be reduced to marrying Miss Demolines, but he did see plainly enough that he was getting into trouble; and yet, for his life, he could not help himself. The moth who flutters round the light knows that he is being burned, and yet he cannot fly away from it. When Madalina had begun to talk to him about women in general, and then about herself, and had told him that such a woman as herself,—even one so liable to the disturbance of violent emotions,—might yet be as true and honest as the sun, he knew that he ought to get up and make his escape. He did not exactly know how the catastrophe would come, but he was quite sure that if he remained there he would be called upon in some way for a declaration of his sentiments,—and that the call would be one which all his wit would not enable him to answer with any comfort. It was very well jesting about milestones, but every jest brought him nearer to the precipice. He perceived that however ludicrous might be the image which his

words produced, she was clever enough in some way to turn that image to her own purpose. He had called a woman a finger-post, and forthwith she had offered to come to him and be finger-post to him for life! What was he to say to her? It was clear that he must say something. As at this moment she was sobbing violently, he could not pass the offer by as a joke. Women will say that his answer should have been very simple, and his escape very easy. But men will understand that it is not easy to reject even a Miss Demolines when she offers herself for matrimony. And, moreover,—as Johnny bethought himself at this crisis of his fate,—Lady Demolines was no doubt at the other side of the drawing-room door, ready to stop him, should he attempt to run away. In the meantime the sobs on the sofa became violent, and still more violent. He had not even yet made up his mind what to do, when Madalina, springing to her feet, stood before him, with her curls wildly waving and her arms extended. "Let it be as though it were unsaid," she exclaimed. John Eames had not the slightest objection; but, nevertheless, there was a difficulty even in this. Were he simply to assent to this latter proposition, it could not be but that the feminine nature of Miss Demolines would be outraged by so uncomplimentary an acquiescence. He felt that he ought at least to hesitate a little,—to make some pretence at closing upon the rich offer that had been made to him; only that were he to show any such pretence the rich offer would, no doubt, be repeated. His Madalina had twitted him in the earlier part of their interview with knowing nothing of the nature of women. He did know enough to feel assured that any false step on his part now would lead him into very serious difficulties. "Let it be as though it were unsaid! Why, oh, why, have I betrayed myself?" exclaimed Madalina.

John now had risen from his chair, and coming up to her took her by the arm and spoke a word. "Compose yourself," he said. He spoke in his most affectionate voice, and he stood very close to her.

"How easy it is to bid me do that," said Madalina. "Tell the sea to compose itself when it rages!"

"Madalina!" said he.

"Well,—what of Madalina? Madalina has lost her own respect,—for ever."

"Do not say that."

"Oh, John,—why did you ever come here? Why? Why did we meet at that fatal woman's house? Or, meeting so, why did we not part as strangers? Sir, why have you come here to my mother's house

day after day, evening after evening, if——. Oh, heavens, what am I saying? I wonder whether you will scorn me always?"

"I will never scorn you."

"And you will pardon me?"

"Madalina, there is nothing to pardon."

"And—you will love me?" Then, without waiting for any more encouraging reply,—unable, probably, to wait a moment longer, she sunk upon his bosom. He caught her, of course,—and at that moment the drawing-room door was opened, and Lady Demolines entered the chamber. John Eames detected at a glance the skirt of the old white dressing gown which he had seen whisking away on the occasion of his last visit at Porchester Terrace. But on the present occasion Lady Demolines wore over it a short red opera cloak, and the cap on her head was ornamented with coloured ribbons. "What is this," she said, "and why am I thus disturbed?" Madalina lay motionless in Johnny's arms, while the old woman glowered at him from under the coloured ribbons. "Mr. Eames, what is it that I behold?" she said.

"Your daughter, madam, seems to be a little unwell," said Johnny. Madalina kept her feet firm upon the ground, but did not for a moment lose her purchase against Johnny's waistcoat. Her respirations came very strong, but they came a good deal stronger when he mentioned the fact that she was not so well as she might be.

"Unwell!" said Lady Demolines. And John was stricken at the moment with a conviction that her ladyship must have passed the early years of her life upon the stage. "You would trifle with me, sir. Beware that you do not trifle with her,—with Madalina!'

"My mother," said Madalina; but still she did not give up her purchase, and the voice seemed to come half from her and half from Johnny. "Come to me, my mother." Then Lady Demolines hastened to her daughter, and Madalina between them was gradually laid at her length upon the sofa. The work of laying her out, however, was left almost entirely to the stronger arm of Mr. John Eames. "Thanks, mother," said Madalina; but she had not as yet opened her eyes, even for an instant. "Perhaps I had better go now," said Johnny. The old woman looked at him with eyes which asked him whether "he didn't wish he might get it" as plainly as though the words had been pronounced. "Of course I'll wait if I can be of any service," said Johnny.

"I must know more of this, sir, before you leave the house," said Lady Demolines. He saw that between them both there might probably be a very bad quarter of an hour in store for him; but he swore

to himself that no union of dragon and tigress should extract from him a word that could be taken as a promise of marriage.

The old woman was now kneeling by the head of the sofa, and Johnny was standing close by her side. Suddenly Madalina opened her eyes,—opened them very wide and gazed around her. Then slowly she raised herself on the sofa, and turned her face first upon her mother and then upon Johnny. "You here, mamma!" she said.

"Dearest one, I am near you. Be not afraid," said her ladyship.

"Afraid! Why should I be afraid? John! My own John! Mamma, he is my own." And she put out her arms to him, as though calling to him to come to her. Things were now very bad with John Eames,—so bad that he would have given a considerable lump out of Lord de Guest's legacy to be able to escape at once into the street. The power of a woman, when she chooses to use it recklessly, is, for the moment, almost unbounded.

"I hope you find yourself a little better," said John, struggling to speak, as though he were not utterly crushed by the occasion.

Lady Demolines slowly raised herself from her knees, helping herself with her hands against the shoulder of the sofa,—for though still very clever, she was old and stiff,—and then offered both her hands to Johnny. Johnny cautiously took one of them, finding himself unable to decline them both. "My son!" she exclaimed; and before he knew where he was the old woman had succeeded in kissing his nose and his whiskers. "My son!" she said again.

Now the time had come for facing the dragon and the tigress in their wrath. If they were to be faced at all, the time for facing them had certainly arrived. I fear that John's heart sank low in his bosom at that moment. "I don't quite understand," he said, almost in a whisper. Madalina put out one arm towards him, and the fingers trembled. Her lips were opened, and the white row of interior ivory might be seen plainly; but at the present conjuncture of affairs she spoke not a word. She spoke not a word; but her arm remained stretched out towards him, and her fingers did not cease to tremble.

"You do not understand!" said Lady Demolines, drawing herself back, and looking, in her short open cloak, like a knight who has donned his cuirass, but has forgotten to put on his leg-gear. And she shook the bright ribbons of her cap, as a knight in his wrath shakes the crest of his helmet. "You do not understand, Mr. Eames! What is it, sir, that you do not understand?"

"There is some misconception, I mean," said Johnny.

"Mother!" said Madalina, turning her eyes from her recreant lover

to her tender parent; trembling all over, but still keeping her hand extended. "Mother!"

"My darling! But leave him to me, dearest. Compose yourself."

"'Twas the word that he said—this moment; before he pressed me to his heart."

"I thought you were fainting," said Johnny.

"Sir!" And Lady Demolines, as she spoke, shook her crest, and glared at him, and almost flew at him in her armour.

"It may be that nature has given way with me, and that I have been in a dream," said Madalina.

"That which mine eyes saw was no dream," said Lady Demolines. "Mr. Eames, I have given to you the sweetest name that can fall from an old woman's lips. I have called you my son."

"Yes, you did, I know. But, as I said before, there is some mistake. I know how proud I ought to be, and how happy, and all that kind of thing. But——" Then there came a screech from Madalina, which would have awakened the dead, had there been any dead in that house. The page and the cook, however, took no notice of it, whether they were awakened or not. And having screeched, Madalina stood erect upon the floor, and she also glared upon her recreant lover. The dragon and the tiger were there before him now, and he knew that it behoved him to look to himself. As he had a battle to fight, might it not be best to put a bold face upon it? "The truth is," said he, "that I don't understand this kind of thing at all."

"Not understand it, sir?" said the dragon.

"Leave him to me, mother," said the tigress, shaking her head again, but with a kind of shake differing from that which she had used before. "This is my business, and I'll have it out for myself. If he thinks I'm going to put up with his nonsense he's mistaken. I've been straightforward and above board with you, Mr. Eames, and I expect to be treated in the same way in return. Do you mean to tell my mother that you deny that we are engaged?"

"Well; yes; I do. I'm very sorry, you know, if I seem to be uncivil——"

"It's because I've no brother," said the tigress. "He thinks that I have no man near me to protect me. But he shall find that I can protect myself. John Eames, why are you treating me like this?"

"I shall consult my cousin the serjeant to-morrow," said the dragon. "In the meantime he must remain in this house. I shall not allow the front door to be unlocked for him."

This, I think, was the bitterest moment of all to Johnny. To be

confined all night in Lady Demolines' drawing-room would, of itself, be an intolerable nuisance. And then the absurdity of the thing, and the story that would go abroad! And what should he say to the dragon's cousin the serjeant, if the serjeant should be brought upon the field before he was able to escape from it. He did not know what a serjeant might not do to him in such circumstances. There was one thing no serjeant should do, and no dragon! Between them all they should never force him to marry the tigress. At this moment Johnny heard a tramp along the pavement, and he rushed to the window. Before the dragon or even the tigress could arrest him, he had thrown up the sash, and had appealed in his difficulty to the guardian of the night. "I say, old fellow," said Johnny, "don't you stir from that till I tell you." The policeman turned his bull's-eye upon the window, and stood perfectly motionless. "Now, if you please, I'll say good-night," said Johnny. But, as he spoke, he still held the open window in his hand.

"What means this violence in my house?" said the dragon.

"Mamma, you had better let him go," said the tigress. "We shall know where to find him."

"You will certainly be able to find me," said Johnny.

"Go," said the dragon, shaking her crest,—shaking all her armour at him, "dastard, go!"

"Policeman," shouted Johnny, while he still held the open window in his hand, "mind you don't stir till I come out." The bull's-eye was shifted a little, but the policeman spoke never a word.

"I wish you good-night, Lady Demolines," said Johnny. "Good-night, Miss Demolines." Then he left the window and made a run for the door. But the dragon was there before him.

"Let him go, mamma," said the tigress as she closed the window. "We shall only have a rumpus."

"That will be all," said Johnny. "There isn't the slightest use in your trying to keep me here."

"And are we never to see you again?" said the tigress, almost languishing again with one eye.

"Well; no. What would be the use? No man likes to be shut in, you know."

"Go then," said the tigress; "but if you think that this is to be the end of it, you'll find yourself wonderfully mistaken. You poor false, drivelling creature! Lily Dale won't touch you with a pair of tongs. It's no use your going to her."

"Go away, sir, this moment, and don't contaminate my room an instant longer by your presence," said the dragon, who had observed

through the window that the bull's-eye was still in full force before the house. Then John Eames withdrew, and descending into the hall made his way in the dark to the front door. For aught he knew there might still be treachery in regard to the lock; but his heart was comforted as he heard the footfall of the policeman on the door-step. With much fumbling he succeeded at last in turning the key and drawing the bolt, and then he found himself at liberty in the street. Before he even spoke a word to the policeman he went out into the road and looked up at the window. He could just see the figure of the dragon's helmet as she was closing the shutters. It was the last he ever saw of Lady Demolines or of her daughter.

"What was it all about?" said the policeman.

"I don't know that I can just tell you," said Johnny, searching in his pocket-book for half a sovereign which he tendered to the man. "There was a little difficulty, and I'm obliged to you for waiting."

"There ain't nothing wrong?" said the man suspiciously, hesitating for a moment before he accepted the coin.

"Nothing on earth. I'll wait with you, while you have the house opened and inquire, if you wish it. The truth is somebody inside refused to have the door opened, and I didn't want to stay there all night."

"They're a rummy couple, if what I hear is true."

"They are a rummy couple," said Johnny.

"I suppose it's all right," said the policeman, taking the money. And then John walked off home by himself, turning in his mind all the circumstances of his connection with Miss Demolines. Taking his own conduct as a whole, he was rather proud of it; but he acknowledged to himself that it would be well that he should keep himself free from the society of Madalinas for the future.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

BARCHESTER CLOISTERS.

On the morning of the Sunday after the dean's return Mr. Harding was lying in his bed, and Posy was sitting on the bed beside him. It was manifest to all now that he became feebler and feebler from day to day, and that he would never leave his bed again. Even the archdeacon had shaken his head, and had acknowledged to his wife that the last day for her father was near at hand. It would very soon be necessary that he should select another vicar for St. Ewolds.

"Grandpa won't play cat's-cradle," said Posy, as Mrs. Arabin entered the room.

"No, darling,—not this morning," said the old man. He himself knew well enough that he would never play cat's-cradle again. Even that was over for him now.

"She teases you, papa," said Mrs. Arabin.

"No, indeed," said he. "Posy never teases me;" and he slowly moved his withered hand down outside the bed, so as to hold the child by her frock. "Let her stay with me, my dear."

"Dr. Filgrave is downstairs, papa. You will see him, if he comes up?" Now Dr. Filgrave was the leading physician of Barchester, and nobody of note in the city,—or for the matter of that in the eastern division of the county,—was allowed to start upon the last great journey without some assistance from him as the hour of going drew nigh. I do not know that he had much reputation for prolonging life, but he was supposed to add a grace to the hour of departure. Mr. Harding had expressed no wish to see the doctor,—had rather declared his conviction that Dr. Filgrave could be of no possible service to him. But he was not a man to persevere in his objection in opposition to the wishes of the friends around him; and as soon as the archdeacon had spoken a word on the subject he assented.

"Of course, my dear, I will see him."

"And Posy shall come back when he has gone," said Mrs. Arabin.

"Posy will do me more good than Dr. Filgrave I am quite sure;—but Posy shall go now." So Posy scrambled off the bed, and the doctor was ushered into the room.

"A day or two will see the end of it, Mr. Archdeacon;—I should

say a day or two," said the doctor, as he met Dr. Grantly in the hall. "I should say that a day or two would see the end of it. Indeed I will not undertake that twenty-four hours may not see the close of his earthly troubles. He has no suffering, no pain, no disturbing cause. Nature simply retires to rest." Dr. Filgrave, as he said this, made a slow falling motion with his hands, which alone on various occasions had been thought to be worth all the money paid for his attendance. "Perhaps you would wish that I should step in in the evening, Mr. Dean? As it happens, I shall be at liberty." The dean of course said that he would take it as an additional favour. Neither the dean nor the archdeacon had the slightest belief in Dr. Filgrave, and yet they would hardly have been contented that their father-in-law should have departed without him.

"Look at that man, now," said the archdeacon, when the doctor had gone, "who talks so glibly about nature going to rest. I've known him all my life. He's an older man by some months than our dear old friend upstairs. And he looks as if he were going to attend death-beds in Barchester for ever."

"I suppose he is right in what he tells us now?" said the dean.

"No doubt he is; but my belief doesn't come from his saying it." Then there was a pause as the two church dignitaries sat together, doing nothing, feeling that the solemnity of the moment was such that it would be hardly becoming that they should even attempt to read. "His going will make an old man of me," said the archdeacon. "It will be different with you."

"It will make an old woman of Eleanor, I fear."

"I seem to have known him all my life," said the archdeacon. "I have known him ever since I left college; and I have known him as one man seldom knows another. There is nothing that he has done, —as I believe, nothing that he has thought,—with which I have not been cognizant. I feel sure that he never had an impure fancy in his mind, or a faulty wish in his heart. His tenderness has surpassed the tenderness of woman; and yet, when an occasion came for showing it, he had all the spirit of a hero. I shall never forget his resignation of the hospital, and all that I did and said to make him keep it."

"But he was right?"

"As Septimus Harding he was, I think, right; but it would have been wrong in any other man. And he was right, too, about the deanery." For promotion had once come in Mr. Harding's way, and he, too, might have been Dean of Barchester. "The fact is, he never was wrong. He couldn't go wrong. He lacked guile, and he feared

God,—and a man who does both will never go far astray. I don't think he ever coveted aught in his life,—except a new case for his violoncello and somebody to listen to him when he played it." Then the archdeacon got up, and walked about the room in his enthusiasm; and, perhaps, as he walked some thoughts as to the sterner ambition of his own life passed through his mind. What things had he coveted? Had he lacked guile? He told himself that he had feared God,—but he was not sure that he was telling himself true even in that.

During the whole of the morning Mrs. Arabin and Mrs. Grantly were with their father, and during the greater part of the day there was absolute silence in the room. He seemed to sleep; and they, though they knew that in truth he was not sleeping, feared to disturb him by a word. About two Mrs. Baxter brought him his dinner, and he did rouse himself, and swallowed a spoonful or two of soup and half a glass of wine. At this time Posy came to him, and stood at the bedside, looking at him with her great wide eyes. She seemed to be aware that life had now gone so far with her dear old friend that she must not be allowed to sit upon his bed again. But he put his hand out to her, and she held it, standing quite still and silent. When Mrs. Baxter came to take away the tray, Posy's mother got up, and whispered a word to the child. Then Posy went away, and her eyes never beheld the old man again. That was a day which Posy will never forget,—not though she should live to be much older than her grandfather was when she thus left him.

"It is so sweet to have you both here," he said, when he had been lying silent for nearly an hour after the child had gone. Then they got up, and came and stood close to him. "There is nothing left for me to wish, my dears;—nothing." Not long after that he expressed a desire that the two husbands,—his two sons-in-law,—should come to him; and Mrs. Arabin went to them, and brought them to the room. As he took their hands he merely repeated the same words again. "There is nothing left for me to wish, my dears;—nothing." He never spoke again above his breath; but ever and anon his daughters, who watched him, could see that he was praying. The two men did not stay with him long, but returned to the gloom of the library. The gloom had almost become the darkness of night, and they were still sitting there without any light, when Mrs. Baxter entered the room. "The dear gentleman is no more," said Mrs. Baxter; and it seemed to the archdeacon that the very moment of his father's death had repeated itself. When Dr. Filgrave called he was told that his services could be of no further use. "Dear, dear!" said the doctor. "We

are all dust, Mrs. Baxter; are we not?" There were people in Barchester who pretended to know how often the doctor had repeated this little formula during the last thirty years.

There was no violence of sorrow in the house that night; but there were aching hearts, and one heart so sore that it seemed that no cure for its anguish could ever reach it. "He has always been with me," Mrs. Arabin said to her husband, as he strove to console her. "It was not that I loved him better than Susan, but I have felt so much more of his loving tenderness. The sweetness of his voice has been in my ears almost daily since I was born."

They buried him in the cathedral which he had loved so well, and in which nearly all the work of his life had been done; and all Barchester was there to see him laid in his grave within the cloisters. There was no procession of coaches, no hearse, nor was there any attempt at funereal pomp. From the dean's side door, across the vaulted passage, and into the transept,—over the little step upon which he had so nearly fallen when last he made his way out of the building, —the coffin was carried on men's shoulders. It was but a short journey from his bedroom to his grave. But the bell had been tolling sadly all the morning, and the nave and the aisles and the transepts, close up to the door leading from the transept into the cloister, were crowded with those who had known the name and the figure and the voice of Mr. Harding as long as they had known anything. Up to this day no one would have said specially that Mr. Harding was a favourite in the town. He had never been forward enough in anything to become the acknowledged possessor of popularity. But, now that he was gone, men and women told each other how good he had been. They remembered the sweetness of his smile, and talked of loving little words which he had spoken to them,—either years ago or the other day, for his words had always been loving. The dean and the archdeacon came first, shoulder to shoulder, and after them came their wives. I do not know that it was the proper order for mourning, but it was a touching sight to be seen, and was long remembered in Barchester. Painful as it was for them, the two women would be there, and the two sisters would walk together;—nor would they go before their husbands. Then there were the archdeacon's two sons,—for the Rev. Charles Grantly had come to Plumstead on the occasion. And in the vaulted passage which runs between the deanery and the end of the transept all the chapter, with the choir, the prebendaries, with the fat old chancellor, the precentor, and the minor canons down to the little choristers,—they all were there, and followed in at

the transept door, two by two. And in the transept they were joined by another clergyman whom no one had expected to see that day. The bishop was there, looking old and worn,—almost as though he were unconscious of what he was doing. Since his wife's death no one had seen him out of the palace or of the palace grounds till that day. But there he was,—and they made way for him into the procession behind the two ladies,—and the archdeacon, when he saw it, resolved that there should be peace in his heart, if peace might be possible.

They made their way into the cloisters where the grave had been dug,—as many as might be allowed to follow. The place indeed was open to all who chose to come; but they who had only slightly known the man, refrained from pressing upon those who had a right to stand around his coffin. But there was one other there whom the faithful chronicler of Barchester should mention. Before any other one had reached the spot, the sexton and the verger between them had led in between them, among the graves beneath the cloisters, a blind man, very old, with a wondrous stoop, but who must have owned a grand stature before extreme old age had bent him, and they placed him sitting on a stone in the corner of the archway. But as soon as the shuffling of steps reached his ears, he raised himself with the aid of his stick, and stood during the service leaning against the pillar. The blind man was so old that he might almost have been Mr. Harding's father. This was John Bunce, a bedesman from Hiram's Hospital,—and none perhaps there had known Mr. Harding better than he had known him. When the earth had been thrown on to the coffin, and the service was over, and they were about to disperse, Mrs. Arabin went up to the old man, and taking his hand between hers whispered a word into his ear. "Oh, Miss Eleanor," he said. "Oh, Miss Eleanor!" Within a fortnight he also was lying within the cathedral precincts.

And so they buried Mr. Septimus Harding, formerly Warden of Hiram's Hospital in the city of Barchester, of whom the chronicler may say that that city never knew a sweeter gentleman or a better Christian.

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